

# Ka Pae Ki'i Mahu o Wailua: The Petroglyphs of Wailua, District of Lihue, Island of Kaua'i. Site 50-30-08-105A.

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## Introduction

One of the most famous petroglyph sites in the Hawaiian Islands is found in the mouth of the Wailua River (Fig. 1 and 2). The area was once a well-known site in the cultural-historical lore of the island of Kaua'i: a dance, two legends and several images formerly commemorated the site. Today, only the legend remains, hidden in two out-of-print sources. Recent interest in the site has begun to grow. This article, a version of which originally appeared in *Kaua'i Community College Archaeology on Kaua'i*, Vol. 11:2(29) for December 1984, will discuss and synthesize the data now available and present an interpretation of the data and describe the site as it once was. The Anthropology Club of Kaua'i Community College wishes to thank the Bishop Museum for its assistance, cooperation and permission to use the photographs in their collections. [Note: the data for the Wailua documentation project was lost in Hurricane Iniki, thus we were unable to include all the photographs that were in the original report.]

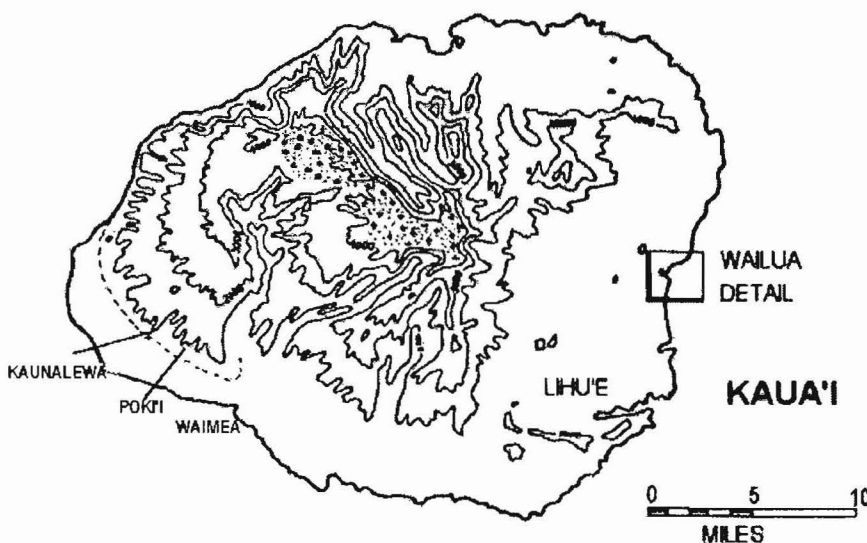


Figure 1: Map of Kaua'i showing area of petroglyph site.

## History

The Wailua petroglyph boulders were well-known in the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, as evidenced by two legends printed in 1899 by Manu and 1917 by Dickey. Neither J.F.G. Stokes (1909) nor W.C. Bennett (1931), both

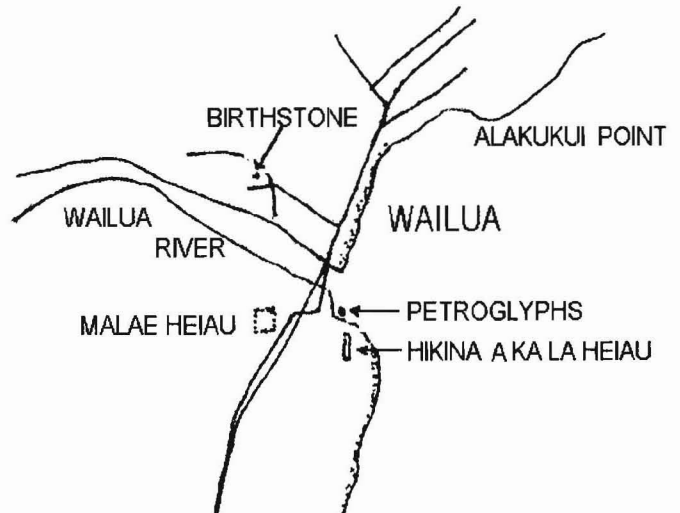


Figure 2: Map showing location of the petroglyph site.

of the Bishop Museum, mentioned the site when they surveyed the island. It was not until the 1940s that the petroglyph boulders were mentioned in tourist guides. It is possible that the site was covered with sand (as it often is) when the Bishop Museum scientists surveyed Kaua'i. The visibility of the boulders is determined by the vagaries of the weather; e.g., the flow pattern at the mouth of the Wailua River, the sand that is deposited by storms, and the tides.

In 1966 the Federal Government designated several sites in the Hawaiian Islands as National Historic Landmarks. One of these was the Wailua Complex of Heiau district, site coded 50-30-08-502. This designation automatically placed all sites within the district on the National Register of Historic Places. However, at that time there were no individual site codes for the non-temple sites. On October 8, 1971, the same landmark and temple sites were nominated by the Hawai'i Historic Places Review Board to the Hawai'i Register of Historic Sites. However, the petroglyph boulders were not surveyed nor coded as an individually important site. Because the boulders seem to be historically part of the temple of Hikina-a-ka-la and the City of Refuge, Hau'ola (both site coded 50-30-08-105), the site has been designated by the author as 50-30-08-105A.

In the 1960s two University of Hawai'i professors in Art,

J. Halley Cox and Edward Stasack, collected data for a book on Hawaiian petroglyphs, which was published in 1970. Their short reference on page 88-89 is the latest description of the site: "KA-A1-6. Boulders on shore near the Southern boundary of Lihue district, south side of the mouth of Wailua River. Human figures, linear and curved outline, spiral (the only one known in the islands).  $\pm 16$  units."

Two explanations should be made at this time concerning the Cox and Stasack reference. The first is that they used the Bishop Museum site code (KA-A1-6) and secondly, the site is not near the southern boundary of Lihue district but at its northernmost boundary between Lihue and Kapa'a.

In 1973, the Anthropology club of Kaua'i Community College surveyed the temple of Hikina-a-ka-la and spent some time in drawing the boulders and respective petroglyphs of the site, known as Ka-pae-ki'i-mahu. The map and drawings of the boulder field in this report are from the survey made in 1973.

### Legend

There are two major references to the legend of the petroglyphs of Wailua. The earliest is from Moses Manu (1899 and manuscript), and the later one from Judge Lyle A. Dickey (1917). Both authors claimed Kaua'i as their home. The legends are properly classed as aetiological legends, or legends which have as their function the explanation of origins.

Manu's version was reprinted and translated by Barrere, Puku'i and Kelly in 1980. In rough outline, the legend tells of Kapo and her party leaving Ni'ihau for Kaua'i; they came upon a surfing competition at Wailua. Here Kapo and her sisters were invited by some of the men to ride on the famous surf of Wailua called Maka'iwa. Accepting, they rode the first wave in pairs with the men. On the second wave, using their supernatural powers, they left the men behind while they rode to shore and awaited the third wave. The third wave, which was described as a mountain of water rather than normal surf, plummeted the men and forced them beneath the wave to their death. There they were changed into stones at the mouth of the Wailua River. Since then, these boulders are known as the row of images, or *pae ki'i*, and can still be seen when wave and river action remove the sand.

The second, by Dickey, relates the boulders to a Maui legend: "Maui wished to bring the Hawaiian Islands together and for that purpose to catch the powerful fish Luehu, which, if he hooked, would cause all the islands to draw together. The fish could only be caught on the night of Lono and Maui would go out on that night each month with his eight brothers to fish for it....His mother, Hina, told him not to disturb any bailing dish he might find floating in the water at the mouth of the Wailua River as this would be his beautiful sister Hina-ke-ka'a. However, when Maui saw a dish for bailing out canoes floating near, he told his brothers not to look behind them on pain of death and picked up the bailing dish and put it behind him in the canoe, where it turned into a beautiful

woman. As soon as Luehu was caught the Hawaiian Islands began to draw together. As Kaua'i and O'ahu came near, great crowds gathered on the shore of O'ahu and cheered. This did not disturb the brothers of Maui at first, who paddled steadily, but when those cheering exclaimed at the beauty of the woman behind Maui, all the brothers turned at once to look. Immediately the great fish became loose from the hook and the islands slid apart.... Because of their looking back, Maui's brothers were, on their return to Wailua, turned into stones and set across the mouth of the Wailua River."

"The stones are said to have formed part of the wall of the City of Refuge when the course of the river was different. They are called 'Pae-manu-o-Wailua,' also *paikii*, or picture rocks. It is said that a sculptor of ancient times, carving idols, could only make one to suit him and threw the others away. Those rocks are some of them; the marks being the hieroglyphics of the ancient sculptor." (After Cox and Stasack 1970:75-6).

The two legends of Ka-pae-ki'i-mahu-o-Wailua are similar in three respects: 1) the death of men; 2) the men became boulders; 3) there was no mention of the petroglyphs or carvings. Both central characters, Kapo (or Kapo-'ula-kina'u) and Maui (or Maui-ki'i-ki'i-a-kalana), are Hawaiian demigods. Kapo was the half-sister of Pele, sired by a common mother, Haumea. Kapo's father was Ku-waha-ilo. Kapo-'ula-kina'u's parentage insured her a place in sorcery as well as being the double-personality patron demi-goddess of the dance. Kapo usually appeared as the vengeful part of her double-personality which was Laka, the passive demi-goddess of fruitfulness and love. It is not unusual that her vengeful side caused the men to be pounded to death by the surf and her sorcery changed their bodies into boulders to

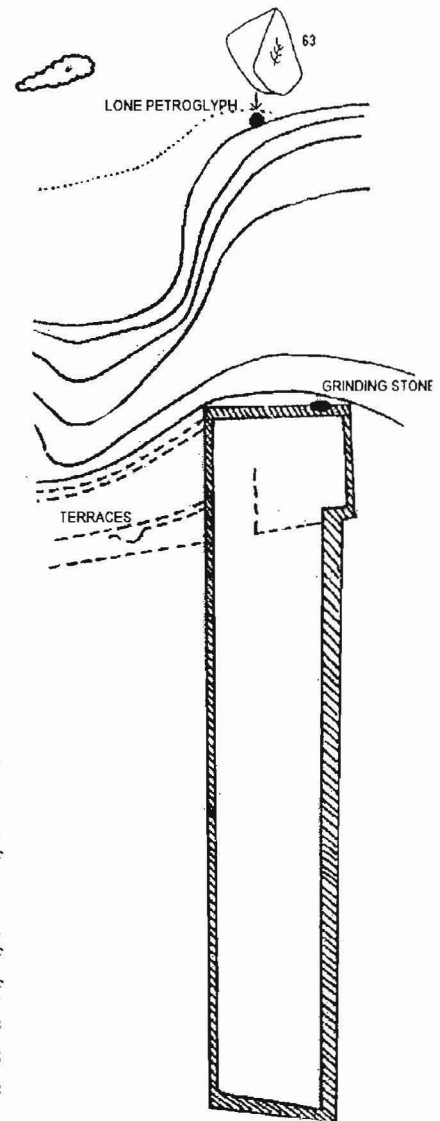


Figure 3: Map showing Hikina-a-ka-la Heiau and location of petroglyph on boulder 63.

remind mortals of her awesome power.

The other demigod, Maui, is often called Maui-of-a-thousand-tricks; he was born as a miscarriage or as a blood clot. Abandoned, he was rescued and restored as the youngest brother of seven children. His father was Kalana and his mother was Hina-a-ke-ahi. The legend of the Wailua petroglyphs as described by Dickey is a curious one because it combines several typical Maui stories with non-Maui themes. The first is his desire to bring all the islands together, which is not a theme of Maui stories in Hawai'i. The second is to catch the powerful fish Luehu (*lua-ehu*), an *ulua* (a species of crevalle or jack). The fish was supposed to be the brother of Maui's mother (Loumala 1949:98,112). Dickey's story mentions the hook but not its name. This is another Maui theme of his going to the underworld to get the special fishhook called Manai-a-kalani. The bailing cup, Hina-ke-ka'a, is not mentioned as Maui's sister but a woman he later rescues and marries. Dickey's legend was an ingenious combination of well-known Maui themes with the end result being the punishment of his brothers.

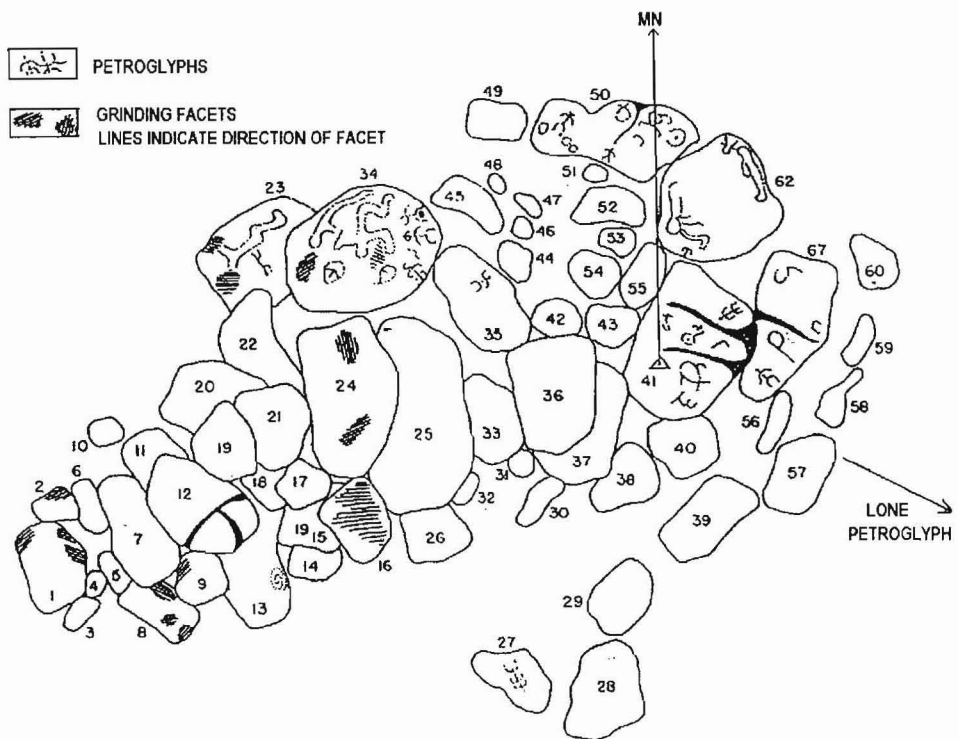


Figure 4: *Ka pae ki'i mahu o Wailua boulder field and petroglyphs, Wailua, Kaua'i.*

*Kaunalewa ke ki'i(2)*

*Hi'uwai i Wailua  
Ka pae ki'i mahu  
Ua'ike a*

The limber-jointed images  
that swing and sway  
Washed by the waves of Wailua  
... is the row of sexless images  
They are well known.

[Barrere, Puku'i, Kelly 1980:81-2)

### Commemorative Dance

The petroglyphs of Wailua must have been famous in Kaua'i legend and history to have had a dance composed about them. No other petroglyph site has been so honored. Remarkable here is the fact that the legends relate to the boulders whereas the dance relates to both petroglyphs and the wooden images that stood nearby. According to Keahi Luahine (Barrere, Puku'i, Kelly 1980:81-82), the dance was called *Hula ki'i o Poki'i* or the dance of the images of *Poki'i* (or cherished children). Luahine states that the dance originated by the people of Kalalau valley and was danced by children. Usually after a swim in the sea, the children would assume the stiff posturing and movements mimicking the wooden images and petroglyphs of Wailua. There was no musical accompaniment, only the chant by the dancer-chanters.

### Hula Ki'i

*Poki'i ke ki'i*

*Ho'okiki'i ke ki'i*

*Ho'ona'ana'a ke ki'i*

*Ho'oualehe ke ki'i*

The image is at Poki'i (1)

The images that leans back

The image protrudes its belly

The images with bent knees wide  
apart and with grimacing face

[1] Poki'i is a placename for a hill at the base of a ridge also called Poki'i. It is also defined as "cherished child."

[2] Kaunalewa was an ancient spring reserved exclusively for chiefs. Kaunalewa is situated about a mile northwest along the base of the cliffs from Poki'i.

### Petroglyph Site

The Wailua petroglyph site was first surveyed and photographed in 1949 by Ms. Rebecca Banks, a former teacher at Kapa'a High School. She reported 36 figures and indicated that more could be found at the base of the bridge adjacent to the site.

The boulder field was again surveyed in 1973 by the Anthropology Club of Kaua'i Community College. The following compass bearings were taken to orient and locate the boulders (see Fig. 4 for compass station).

338 degrees magnetic to north side of Wailua bridge  
319 degrees magnetic to the south side of the Wailua bridge

118 degrees magnetic to the lone petroglyph on the boulder beach fronting the temple of Hikina-a-ka-la.

134 degrees magnetic to Kaua'i Resort Hotel.



Figure 5. Petroglyph boulders (foreground) at the mouth of the Wailua river.  
(Photo: Georgia Lee)

The boulders upon which the petroglyphs are found are located roughly 20m from the shoreline. The water level is approximately 60cm below the highest boulder when the boulders are exposed by the meandering mouth of the river. Sixty two boulders were counted in the cluster (Fig.4) but only 8 have petroglyphs. Figure 5 is a photo of the petroglyph boulders as seen from the shoreline.

The boulders are of fine-grained gray-blue basalt. Some of the surfaces are coated with a fine black veneer of manganese oxide. This veneer coats the petroglyphs and the grinding facets, an indication of its uniform accumulation since the petroglyphs and grinding facets were made. The forces of the river and ocean are eroding and abrading the surfaces of the boulders; eventually these forces will erase the petroglyphs.

A greater factor in the eventual destruction of the boulders seems to be the chipping and breaking off of major chunks of the rocks by bulldozer blades. Some are accidental; the

bulldozers are used to open up the sand dams that occasionally form across the river mouth. In clearing the sand, the 'dozers will bump into the submerged boulders. Citizen concerns were published in the *Garden Island Newspaper* (July 8, 1968). Evidently the boulders were being damaged from 1965 (letters to Bishop Museum, July 8 and 12, 1965) resulting in the Bishop Museum staff writing to Lihu'e Plantation to be aware of the site and the destruction being wrought. Some form of marker or fence was proposed (July 8, 1965) to isolate and protect the boulders even when covered by sand.

Associated with the petroglyph motifs are grinding or honing facets which are the result of shaping and sharpening stone adzes, chisels or sinkers on these rocks. Some of the facets were made over petroglyphs thereby eradicating a portion of the figures. Boulders recorded as having

grinding facets are shown in Table 1. It is also interesting to note that a large boulder placed upright near the northeastern corner of the temple was once a large grindstone with many interfacing facets. Its placement from the beach to the temple wall was no whim of the architect.

Several fragments of grindstones were also found in the field just below Malae heiau. This temple is located about 150m inland and uphill of Hikina-a-ka-la temple.

A total of 35 petroglyph motifs were recorded in the boulder field. Each boulder in the cluster was numbered from 1 to 62 and marked on the map, Figure 4. The human petroglyph forms are linear or outline. Table 1 lists the numbers and the boulders on which they were found.

All the petroglyphs were pecked to form their outlines and shapes. The function of the figures is unknown but the possibilities are: 1) magical-symbolic; 2) associated with legends; 3) graffiti; 4) historic story markers. Figure 6 presents the various motifs.

TABLE 1. PETROGLYPH FORMS AND GRINDING FACETS

BOULDER	HUMAN			MISCELLANEOUS				GRINDING FACETS
	OUTLINE	STICK	INCOMPLETE STICK	LINES	OVAL	FISH	SPIRAL	
1								2
2								1
8								3
9								1
13							1	
23	1		1					2
24								2
34	2	4	1		1			3
35		1						
41		2		4		1		
50		2	1		2			
61		1		1	3			
62	2	1	1	1				
63		1						
TOTALS	5	12	4	6	6	1	1	14

### Petroglyph Forms

The Wailua petroglyphs number 36 figures and the possibility of finding more seems likely. Ms. Rebecca Banks in the late 1940's reported several more figures at the base of the Wailua bridge adjacent to the site. However, a search made by the author was fruitless although not unexpected due to changes in water level, sand



cover, river water erosion, and so on.

There are two distinct forms of petroglyphs at Wailua. First is the spiral and the second is the outlined profile human form. The spiral is on boulder #13 (see Fig. 4) on the east face of a large boulder. The form is pecked on two adjacent faces of the boulder. It measures 21.0cm by 21.1cm and consists of 2.75 turns. This is the only spiral in the Hawaiian Island chain.

The second distinctive form is a human figure in outline (Fig. 7). There are four of these, plus one incomplete figure. Three of the five are distinctive, showing the side view of humans. These I refer to as the 'kneeling prayer figures' which have an almost fetal form except for the arms and legs which may not be drawn completely up and in toward the body. I have seen similar figures at Puako on the Big Island of Hawai'i and on the raised bas relief forms on a boulder from

forms may be one of the more ancient motifs to be found in these Hawaiian islands.

### Images

According to Keahi Luahine (Barrere, Puku'i, Kelly 1980:81) there once was a row of wooden images, *ka pae ki'i*, located at the mouth of the Wailua River on the grounds of Hau'ola, the place of Refuge, on the eastern half of Kaua'i Island. This means that the images were placed adjacent to, but not within, the temple of Hikina-a-ka-la. The rows of images, *Ka pae ki'i o Wailua* were cared for by Luahine's relative, Kai'akea. Since there is no direct evidence today of the images or their actual location, we assume that the location was probably facing the petroglyph boulders, and set on the ground—possibly on a terraced area, perpendicular to the walls of Hikina-a-ka-la temple. The survey in 1973 (AOK Vol. 3, No. 2, 1974) showed 3 terraces existing and it is likely that one of these held the row of images. Each wooden image probably represented the men who were turned to stone. Perhaps future investigation can prove the images once existed by finding their foundations on which these images were placed.

### Summary

The petroglyphs of Wailua may be a later addition to the legend of the men turned into boulders. Perhaps the boulders were famous and, later on, figures were carved on them. Today the petroglyphs are the focus of the legend. It is curious that no mention of the temple nor the area of refuge is mentioned in connection with the legend. All that remains are fragments of what was once an elaborate story; the truth may never be known.

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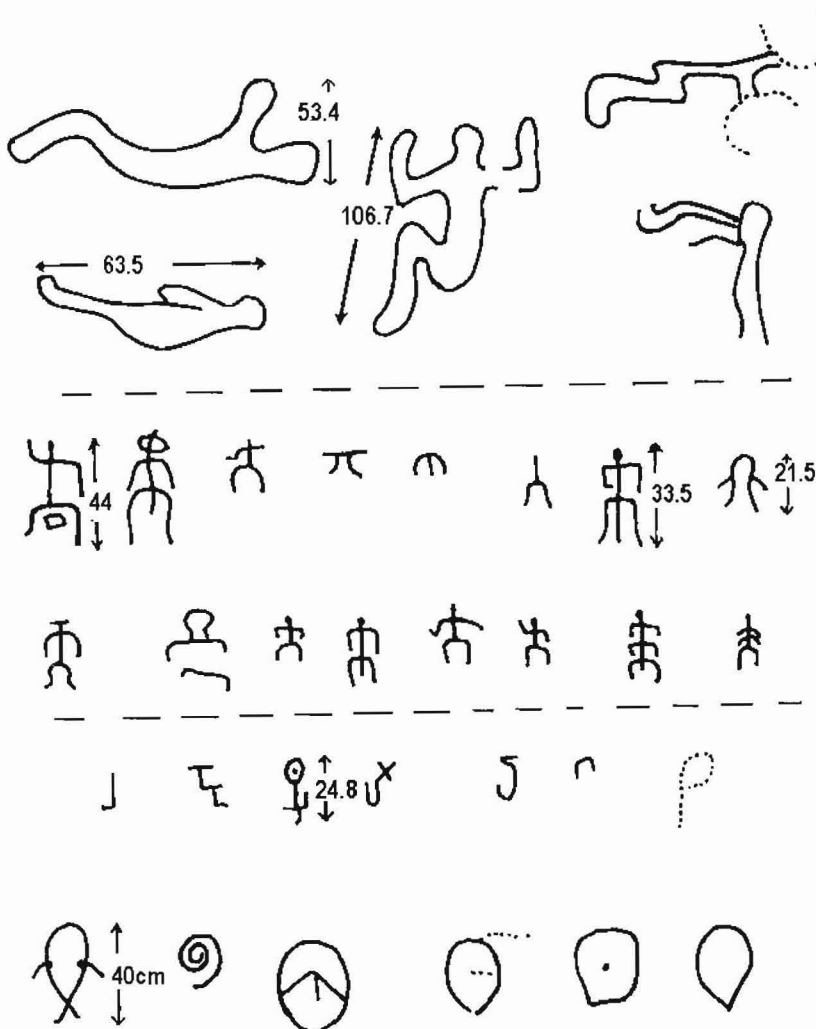


Figure 6. Petroglyph Types

Moanalua at O'ahu (Fig. 8), the carved plaque of Kaua'i (Fig. 9), and in the birdman figures from Easter Island (Fig. 10). The term "kneeling prayer figure" was assigned after I witnessed an old Hawaiian informant describing and demonstrating how her grandmother prayed on the floor of their home. The informant claimed that her grandmother was a strict follower of the ancient ways. These human profile

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- Manu, Moses. 1899. A Hawaiian legend of the terrible war between Pele...and Waka...Ka Loea Kalaiana. May 13-Dec.30, 1899. Mary K. Puku'i, translator. Manuscript, Bishop Museum Library.

## Letters

- 1965: From Ruth Hanner to Kenneth Emory, July 8. Re: Help to preserve petroglyphs.
- 1965: From Ruth Hanner to Kenneth Emory, July 12. Re: Petroglyph boulder suffering damage.
- 1965: From Kenneth Emory to Hans Hansen, Lihu'e Plantation, July 13. Re: careful driving by bulldozer operators at Wailua river mouth.



Figure 7. Figures on boulder

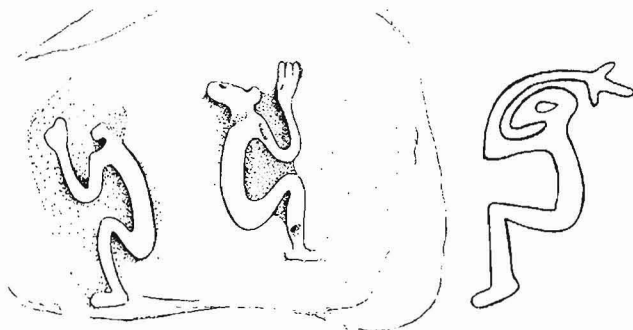


Figure 8. Figures on boulder in the Bishop Museum (left) and at Puako (right)

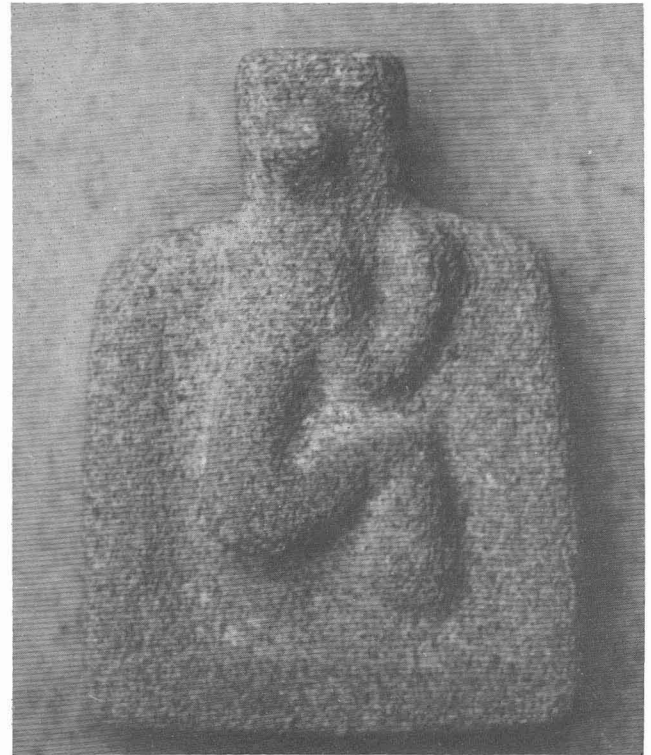


Figure 9. Profile kneeling figure in bas relief on stone plaque (9.5x13cm) that was plowed up from a field in Wailua. The artifact has been stolen from the Kaua'i Museum. (Photo courtesy, Edwin N. Ferdon, Jr.)

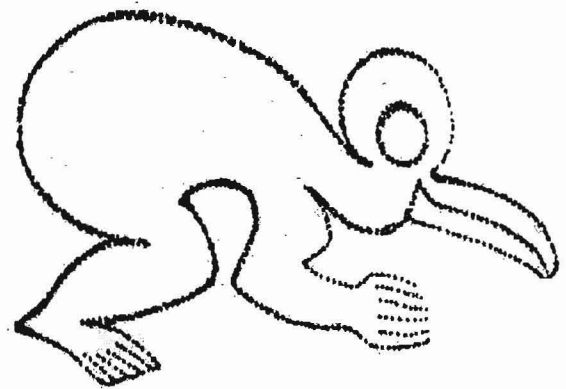


Figure 10. Birdman from Easter Island.